

MIDTOWN WEST MEDICAL AT KING PLOW ARTS CENTER

Midtown West Medical, PC
957 W. Marietta Street NW • Atlanta, GA 30318
Tel: 404.817.0062 • Fax: 404.817.0064
www.midtownwestmedical.com

Kimball A. Johnson, MD
Gloria J. Carusi, RN, Nurse Practitioner
Suzanne Combs, RN

Sunscreen Isn't Enough: Be Alert for Signs, Risks of Melanoma

By Kimball Johnson, M.D. and Gloria Carusi, Nurse Practitioner

Each year, more than 50,000 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer. Alarming, the rate of melanoma diagnosis in this country has more than doubled in the past three decades. If detected early, the success rate for melanoma treatment is good; however, melanoma, like any cancer, can spread to other organs and can be deadly. Skin self-exams and awareness of melanoma risk factors are critical.

A common misconception is that melanoma is strictly related to sun exposure, but in reality, there is no known cause for melanoma, only factors that may place you at a statistically higher risk. Those factors include:

- Having many moles (50 or more)
- Having fair skin
- Personal or family history of melanoma or other skin cancer
- Weakened immune system (i.e., HIV/AIDS patients, chemotherapy patients, and organ transplant recipients)
- Having had one or more severe sunburns as a child or teen
- Overexposure to the sun without proper UV protection

While it is important to take precautions against unnecessary sun exposure, doing so does not guarantee protection from developing melanoma. Be alert for any changes in existing moles or the appearance of new moles. The "ABCD" system of melanoma identification is a good guide for self-exams (moles that exhibit **A**symmetry, irregular **B**orders, uneven **C**olors, and/or an increase in **D**iameter are potentially cancerous), but is not definitive. Inform your healthcare provider if you notice any skin changes.

For more information about melanoma, visit the National Cancer Institute's website at www.cancer.gov.